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Chinook

GUACANAGARI PONTIAC BLACK HAWK
MONTEZUMA CAPTAIN PIPE KEOKUK
GUATIMOTZIN LOGAN SACAGAWEA
POWHATAN CORNPLANTER BENITO JUAREZ
POCAHONTAS JOSEPH BRANT MANGUS
SAMOSET RED JACKET COLORADAS
MASSASOIT LITTLE TURTLE LITTLE CROW
KING PHILIP TECUMSEH SITTING BULL
UNCAS OSCEOLA CHIEF JOSEPH
TEDYUSKUNG SEQUOYA GERONIMO
SHABONEE

TO PERPETUATE THE HISTORY
AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
PEOPLE REPRESENTED BY THE
ABOVE CHIEFS AND WISE MEN
THIS COLLECTION HAS BEEN
GATHERED BY THEIR FRIEND

EDWARD EVERETT AYER

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CHINOOK LANGUAGE OR JARGON.

By

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THE CHINOOK LANGUAGE OR JARGON.

By EDWARD HOLLAND NICOLL.

I WAS about to take a trip up the S——, one of the rivers which flow into Puget Sound. It was early in March, yet the grass was green, the trees were putting out fresh leaves, and the dogwood, salmon-berry, and wild rose were in blossom. The river was swollen by the melting masses of snow on the Cascade Mountains (a prolongation of the Sierra Nevadas), and its waters were rushing rapidly toward the sound. I was considering whether it would be practicable to make headway against the current, when I saw Jack, an Indian, who had been with me on one or two river-journeys, lying lazily in his canoe, enjoying the mild March sun. I went up to him, and our conversation ran thus:

"Klahowya," I said. "Hyas kloshe," replied Jack. "Nika tikegh klatawa kopa chuck; konsi chickamen potlatch?" "Kwinum dollar." "Hyas skookum chuck papet canim?" "Wake hyiu." This is Chinook, and put into English would read: "How do you do?" "Very well." "I want to go up the river." "How much will you give?" "Five dollars." "Will the current make it hard work?" "Not very."

Chinook, a language or jargon, the existence of which few people living east of the Rocky Mountains know of, is the sole medium of communication between the whites and Indians upon the northwest coast of America, from the Columbia River to Alaska, including the tribes scattered over Washington Territory and Oregon. Chinook is a conventional language, and, in this

respect, is like the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean coast, and the "pidgin" English of the East Indies and China.

A century ago, in the year 1787, two vessels, the Columbia, commanded by John Kendrick, and the Washington, by Robert Gray, left Boston on a voyage to the northwest coast of America, to open up a fur trade, and, if possible, to trade with China. At the rendezvous in Nootka Sound, to the westward of Vancouver Island, which latter is a part of what is now British Columbia, the people on the vessels acquired a number of words used by the natives. The expedition going afterward up the Columbia River to Oregon, they carried these Indian words with them there, which, added to some common and easily pronounced English words, formed the beginning and basis of Chinook. Its vocabulary, however, was scant until the coming of the Astor expedition and the settlement of Astoria. It was then enlarged by numerous English words, together with many of French origin, or of the Canadian *patois*. The dialects of the Chinook and Chehalis tribes, which ranged about southeastern Oregon, furnished many words for its development. The Hudson Bay and Northwest Companies, and the early settlers in Oregon, further added to it; it came into use between Indians of different tribes, and even between Americans and Canadians; it spread to Puget Sound, and found its way, with trade, up the Pacific coast and rivers, as explorers and settlers advanced, gradually spreading until its use reached its present extent.

Chinook is not a written language, and the spelling given here is purely phonetic. Of the five or six hundred words in common use, about one third are of English and French derivation; a few can not be traced to any source, and the rest are taken from the Chehalis and Chinook dialects.

No words beginning with the letter *r* are used; the sound of that letter is modified into that of *l* or *p*, the pronunciation of which is the easier. This matter of pronunciation, and not the impression made upon the ear, seems in all tongues to be the true foundation of euphony. There are no words in Chinook which begin with the letters *f, j, q, u, v, x,* or *z;* but two begin with *g,* "get up," and "glease" (grease).

Turning to the words derived from the English, we find "bit," meaning dime, the bit being the general designation on the Pacific coast for a ten-cent piece, and "tea," "sun," "short," "papa," "ole-man," "musket," "smoke," "man," "soap," "paint," "spoon," etc., all of which need no translation. Rice becomes "lice"; fish, "pish"; fire, "piah"; rum, "lum"; rope, "lope"; cry, "cly"; dry, "d'ly." A cat is "puss-puss."

The first white men with whom the Indians in Oregon associated intimately being those of the expedition under Gray and

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Kendrick, from Boston, Americans have always been termed in Chinook "Boston men," while "Boston Illahee" ("illahee," the ground, or earth) stands for the "United States." An Englishman is "King George."

With few exceptions, the words of French origin begin with the letter *l*, that is, the article "le" or "la"; there is no article in Chinook except as found joined or prefixed with these French words. The following are some of the most common: "La pome," apple; "la chaise," chair; "la chandelle," candle; "la table"; "la bal," bullet, ball; "la messe," mass; "la pote," door; "la pois," peas; "diaub" (diable), devil; "marsi" (merci), thanks.

It is impossible, without a knowledge of the two dialects, Chinook and Chehalis, to say what native words in the Chinook jargon belong to each; the Chinook, however, predominates.

Many words have two or more equivalents; as, for example, "chickamen," which means iron, any metal, metallic money; with "dollar," it is silver; "chuck" stands for water, river, stream; "salt chuck" is the sea; "skookum chuck," a rapid; "solleks chuck," a rough sea. "Tum-tum" is the heart, will, opinion. "Mamook tum-tum" means to make up one's mind; "mamook kloshe tum-tum," to make friends or peace. "Polaklie" is night, dark, darkness. "Till" means tired, heavy, a weight. "Wau-wau" is to talk, speak, call, ask, tell, answer, conversation; "cultus wau-wau" is idle talk, nonsense.

Onomatopœia is frequent in Chinook. "Hee-hee," means laughter; "Kah-kah," a crow; "moos moos," a cow; "kal-ak-a-la-ma," a goose; "shwahkuk," a frog; all of these are imitations of natural sounds. These words are native, and their origin is due to the disposition to give an imitative complexion to those words which signify matters recognized by the ear, thus bringing about a similarity between the sign and the thing it stands for. But we have to do here with Chinook, not the "bow-wow theory" of the origin of language.

But few of the verbs are English, though many are formed by prefixing "mamook" to make, or do (native), to an English word; as "mamook pent," to paint; "mamook warm," to heat; "mamook bloom" (broom), to sweep; "mamook wash," to wash. It is a curious fact that neither the verb "to be," nor any of its moods or tenses, are found in Chinook. All verbs are understood wherever necessary in a sentence. There are a number of words which are used indifferently as nouns and verbs, though there are but few which are used solely as verbs.

One form of pronoun answers for the personal and possessive. "Nika" is I and mine; "mika," thou and thine; "yahka," he, his; "nesika" is we, us, ours; "mesika," you, yours; "klaska," they, theirs.

The numerals, probably, are taken from the native tongues, and some of them are as follows: 1, "ikt"; 2, "mokst"; 3, "klone"; 4, "lakit"; 5, "kwinum"; 6, "taghum"; 7, "sinnamoket"; 8, "stotekin"; 9, "kwaist"; 10, "tahtlelum"; 11, "tahtlelum pe ikt"; 20, "mokst tahtlelum"; 100, "ikt tukamonuk."

The missionaries who labor among the natives of the northwest coast from necessity learn Chinook. I once attended a church service in Washington Territory, where, the congregation being made up of Indians, the praying and preaching were both in Chinook. The Lord's prayer is rendered thus:

"Nesika papa klaksta mitlite kopa saghalie, kloshe kopa
"Our father who stayeth in the above, good in
nesika tum-tum mika nem; kloshe mika tyee kopa konaway
our heart (be) thy name; good thou chief among all
tillikum; kloshe mika tum-tum kopa illahee, kahkwa kopa
people; good thy will upon earth, as in
saghalie. Potlatch konaway sun nesika muckamuck. Spose
the above. Give every day our food. If
nesika mamook mesachie, wake mika hyas solleks; pe spose
we do ill, (be) not thou very angry; and if
klaksta mesachie kopa nesika, wake nesika solleks kopa
any one (do) evil toward us, (be) not we angry toward
klaska. Mahsh siah kopa nesika konaway mesachie."
them. Send away far from us all evil."

Any one can acquire Chinook whose memory is retentive enough to enable him to learn a certain number of words; and then, with practice, he will speak it fluently. It is not uncommon to hear young children in Washington Territory and Oregon talk in Chinook as easily as in English.

Many Chinook words have taken root in, and form part of, the Pacific coast vernacular. Some of the most common of these are "tillicum," friend; "tyee," chief, or boss; "kiutan," horse; "muckamuck," food; "cultus," worthless; and "siwash," which is always used for Indian. The motto on the seal of Washington Territory is a word used in Chinook, but native in origin, i. e., "Alki," meaning by-and-by, or in the future.

From what has been said, it will be seen that while Chinook does not rise to the dignity of a language, it is an important factor in every-day life as it exists on the northern Pacific coast. The Indians of that region are peculiar. They get their food easily by fishing, hunting, and gathering the wild roots and berries of the woods. Nomadic bodies hang about the towns and settlements, earning money from the whites in various ways. In a word, they procure their living too readily to develop habits of industry and thrift. The experiment of supporting them on Government reservations, and educating them in useful pursuits, is but partially successful. They become discontented, and long for the freedom

of their life on the sea-coast and rivers. The Indian, too, likes to associate with the white man, from whom, it must be confessed, he learns many of the vices, and but few of the virtues, of civilization. It is not probable that Chinook will fall into disuse for many years to come. Though it is difficult to determine whether or not the native population of this part of our country is materially decreasing at present, the race will, no doubt, in time become reduced to small proportions, and the *raison d'être* of Chinook will gradually cease.

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the charge of Mr. T. W. T. Curtis, and the classical department under Mr. S. M. Capron. These teachers were equally remarkable, although in different ways, for their excellent influence on the pupils under their care. There was an honesty and candor about both of them which were very healthful in example. They did very little "preaching," but their demeanor was in all respects such as to bear watching with the scrutiny of school-children and only gain by it. Mr. Curtis had great skill in the catechetical method, being able to lead a scholar by a series of questions over the track which must be followed to come to an understanding of the subject under discussion. Mr. Capron united dignity and geniality in a remarkable degree. The consequence was, that he had the most admirable discipline, without the least feeling of the irksomeness of discipline on the part of his pupils. On the contrary, he possessed their tender and respectful affection. Mr. Capron was a man of remarkably few words, and he was a striking example of the power that may go forth from a man by what he is and does in the daily life of a school-room. Both these gentlemen employed in the school-room all the best methods of teaching now so much gloried in, without apparently knowing that they had any peculiar method at all. Prof. Sumner has often declared in public that, as a teacher, he is deeply indebted to the sound traditions which he derived from these two men.

He graduated from Yale College in 1863, and in the summer of that year went to Europe. He spent the winter of 1863–'64 in Geneva, studying French and Hebrew with private instructors. He was at Göttingen for the next two years, studying ancient languages, history, especially church history, and biblical science. In answer to some questions, Prof. Sumner has replied as follows:

"My first interest in political economy came from Harriet Martineau's 'Illustrations of Political Economy.' I came upon these by chance, in the library of the Young Men's Institute at Hartford, when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. I read them all through with the greatest avidity, some of them three or four times. There was very little literature at that time with which these books could connect. My teachers could not help me any, and there were no immediate relations between the topics of these books and any public interests of the time. We supposed then that free trade had sailed out upon the smooth sea, and was to go forward without further difficulty, so that what one learned of the fallacies of protection had only the same interest as what one learns about the fallacies of any old and abandoned error. In college we read and recited Wayland's 'Political Economy,' but I believe that my conceptions of capital, labor, money, and trade, were all formed by those books which I read in my boyhood. In college the interest was turned rather on the po-

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Chinook
-47-